

Remarks Following a Meeting With Organizations That Support the United States Military in Iraq and Afghanistan

October 20, 2006

I've had an uplifting and heartwarming conversation with fellow citizens of all ages from across our country who are supporting our troops. These folks don't really care about politics. What they care about is how best to send a strong message to the men and women who wear our uniform that America supports them.

And so we've had examples of people who started web pages to get different supplies to send to troops who are—who need a care package; to a woman who started a group of people to sew garments to help the wounded recover faster; to a guy who helped start video conferencing capabilities so that loved ones can share big moments in their lives together, even though one is in combat; to a child who started treasure hunts to raise money to help kids go to

school. It's a remarkable country when we have people who decide to step up and help men and women who are serving their country in a time of need.

And I want to thank you all for coming, and I appreciate what you're doing. Americasupportsyou.mil is a web site where our fellow citizens can volunteer to help. You can become a part of a group and find out ways that you can support our men and women in uniform. These are brave, courageous people who deserve the full support of the American citizenry.

So I want to thank you all for coming. I appreciate you being here. Thanks very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at a National Italian American Foundation Dinner

October 20, 2006

Ian [Ken],* thank you for that kind introduction. But what you forgot to tell the people was that my mother said, "Listen, son, I know you're going to be going over there this evening. Remember your father has already spoken, so keep your remarks short." [Laughter]

I thank you for your kind words about my mother and father. I am real proud they're with you today. He is a remarkable guy and—[applause]. The only mistake you made was not to insist that Laura spoke instead of me. [Laughter] She's doing great. She said, "Look, you keep it short too, because the food is on the table." [Laughter]

But thanks for letting me come by to say hello. I'm honored to be with you. I love to pay homage to the Italian Americans that have made our country so great. And that's precisely what you do. The National Italian American Foundation is an important organization because it reminds people of the great Italian heritage of many of our citizens. It also heralds the great diversity of our country. So thanks for what you're doing. Thanks for letting me come by to say hello.

I'm honored to be here with the Ambassador from the great country of Italy. Mr. Ambassador, it's good to see you, sir. I am proud to say that Italy is a strong ally of the United States of America.

* White House correction.

I see we've got some of the third branch of Government with us, Justice Scalia and Justice Alito. Thank you all for being here. I know that you are paying Alito an honor, and I tell you, he paid this country an honor by agreeing to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States. I make a lot of decisions as your President, and one of the finest decisions I made was to ask this man to serve.

And I understand you're honoring Frankie Valli. Sorry I'm not going to be around to hear you, but rest assured, I've heard plenty of you when I was growing up. *[Laughter]* Congratulations to both you men. You picked fine winners here. Thanks for letting me come and pay homage to them as well.

I'm proud to be with Secchia—Peter Secchia. See, he picks up the phone, calls the Oval Office, and says, "Man, you're the only sitting President who's never come to this organization." He said, "You better get over here tonight." *[Laughter]* I said, "All right, Secchia." But I'm proud to call you friend.

You know, the story of this country is a story of immigrants, and we've always got to remember that. And some of the greatest stories of our country are the result of your ancestors who came to America and realized the big dream of our country. And what this country must always do is be a land of dreamers and doers, is to reward hard work and honor faith and family. And the Italian Americans inspire that greatness of America every day through your acts of kindness and generosity and through your contributions to the country.

You know, the list of Italian Americans that have made a significant contribution to our country is long. I mean, Tommy Lasorda, Yogi Berra, and for you Colt 45 fans—that's the old Houston baseball team—"Hollywood" Kenny Aspromonte. Where are you, Aspro? Yes, sir.

I'm sorry tonight that one outstanding Italian American can't join you, but he'll be joining me tomorrow at a meeting in

the White House, and that's Peter Pace. Peter "Pac"—*[laughter]*—four-star general in the United States Marine Corps, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. The reason I bring him up and the reason I'm meeting with him—first, there's no finer American than Peter Pace. He's an outstanding American, an outstanding Italian American.

I bring it up because we are in a titanic struggle between extremists and radicals who cannot stand the way of life of America. They don't like the thought that people from different backgrounds are able to live under a nation and work together and achieve greatness. They can't stand the thought of free societies flourishing in their midst.

And generations of Italian Americans before this generation have served with such valor to make sure freedom still stands, and now another generation of Americans is challenged. There are many Italian Americans who wear our uniform today, brave men and women who have volunteered in the great challenge of the 21st century, which is to protect our country from terrorist attack and, at the same time, spread the great blessings of liberty so that a generation of Americans can grow up in peace.

Taking the inspiration of those who have come before us, there's no doubt in my mind that this generation of Americans will succeed. We won't falter in the face of danger. We'll be steadfast in our resolve to protect you. We will be confident in the power of liberty to transform hostile regions into hopeful regions. And when we persevere, someday somebody will step up here to this mike, years from now, and say, "Thank goodness a generation of Americans did their duty for the sake of the security of the United States and the peace of the world."

So I come before you with a lot on my mind. But one of the things that's on my mind is how grateful I am to be the President of such a fabulous country, a country full of spirited, entrepreneurial, decent, compassionate people.

I hope you enjoy your evening tonight. Thanks for letting me come by. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:43 p.m. at the Washington Hilton. In his remarks, he referred to A. Kenneth Ciongoli, chairman, and Ken Aspromonte, member of the board

of directors, National Italian American Foundation; Italy's Ambassador to the U.S. Giovanni Castellaneta; entertainer Frankie Valli; former U.S. Ambassador to Italy Peter F. Secchia; and baseball Hall of Famers Tommy Lasorda and Yogi Berra. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's Radio Address *October 21, 2006*

Good morning. Earlier this week, I spoke with Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq. We discussed the recent increase in violence in his country. Attacks have grown significantly during the first weeks of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

There are a number of reasons for this increase in violence. One reason is that coalition and Iraqi forces have been conducting focused operations to bring security to Baghdad. Side by side, Iraqi and American forces are operating in the city's most violent areas to disrupt Al Qaida, capture enemy fighters, crack down on IED makers, and break up death squads. As we engage our enemies in their stronghold, these enemies are putting up a tough fight. In a briefing in Iraq on Thursday, General William Caldwell said the operation to secure Baghdad has "not met our overall expectations." He also explained, "It's no coincidence that the surge in attacks against coalition forces coincides with our increased presence in the streets in Baghdad."

Our goal in Iraq is clear and unchanging: Our goal is victory. What is changing are the tactics we use to achieve that goal. Our commanders on the ground are constantly adjusting their approach to stay ahead of the enemy, particularly in Baghdad. General Pete Pace, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, recently put it this way: "From a military standpoint, every day is a reassessment day." We have a strategy that allows

us to be flexible and to adapt to changing circumstances. We've changed the way we train the Iraqi security forces. We have changed the way we deliver reconstruction assistance in areas that have been cleared of terrorist influence. And we will continue to be flexible and make every necessary change to prevail in this struggle.

Iraq's new leaders are beginning to take the difficult steps necessary to defeat the terrorists and unite their country. The Prime Minister recently met with tribal leaders from Anbar Province, who told him they are ready to stand up and fight the terrorists. He's also taken action to clean up the Iraqi National Police. His government suspended a National Police unit after allegations that some of its members were linked to militias and death squads. A battalion commander was arrested for possible complicity in sectarian deaths. And earlier this week, two of Iraq's most senior police commanders were reassigned as part of a major restructuring of the national police force.

Another reason for the recent increase in attacks is that the terrorists are trying to influence public opinion here in the United States. They have a sophisticated propaganda strategy. They know they cannot defeat us in the battle, so they conduct high-profile attacks, hoping that the images of violence will demoralize our country and